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THE HOUSEWIFE AND THE WAR.

(Special Information Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture.)

UNCLE SAM NEEDS FRUIT PITS AND NUT SHELLS.



Soldier with the Business Part of a Gas Mask—Tin Container in His Hand Filled with Carbon Obtained from Fruit Stones.

Boys Overseas Protected from Poisonous Gas by Special Carbon.

Save Fruit Stones and Nut Shells Over Here and Save the Lives of Americans Over There—Everyone Who Saves These Important Carbon Requisites for Gas Masks Helps in the War.

Do not throw away a single peach, plum, apricot, cherry, prune, date or olive pit nor the shell of a nut.

The United States Government asks you to give to it, through the Red Cross, the fruit stones you would ordinarily throw away. About 200 peach stones will provide enough carbon for a gas mask—the only protection between our boys and poisonous gases being used by Germans.

One of the essentials in the respirator designed to protect our soldiers on the front lines against deadly gases is carbon. The efficiency of the mask to a large extent depends upon the quality of the carbon. An excellent quality is obtained from fruit pits and nut shells. These stones and shells, which are ordinarily regarded as valueless, the people of this country now are asked to save, as our Government is experiencing difficulty in getting the right kind of carbon. The British Government has also asked for a supply of high-grade carbon to use for the same purpose.

The pits before they are delivered to central collecting points should not be cracked, but dried carefully in the sun or in ovens. Rain will not injure the stones or shells provided they are thoroughly dried afterwards.

NUT SHELLS VALUABLE ALSO.

Large quantities of hickory nuts, walnuts, and butternuts are to be found in various sections of the country and only limited amounts are now gathered annually. As the meats are valuable food, they should be extracted from the shells before the latter are delivered to the Red Cross collecting stations. Nut meats will keep perfectly in a dry place for months or they may be marketed. The whole nuts may be sent, if the nut meats are not used locally. Quantities of pignuts and bitternuts remain uncollected each year, even by the squirrels, because of the taste of the meats, or their smallness; the shells of these, however, are excellent for carbon.

Only the shells of the nuts and the stones from the fruit listed above should be sent, as the Government chemists have carefully selected the kinds which are most valuable for the gas mask manufacture. It requires about 200 peach pits or 7 pounds of nut shells to produce carbon enough for one mask. This mask will protect the boys in the front line trenches against every kind of gas excepting one, which is seldom encountered. A mask may be used for 18 hours before its contents become so surcharged with the gas as to render it valueless.

URGES SAVING BY COMMERCIAL CANNERIES.

Through the county agricultural agents the United States Department of Agriculture is urging large establishments such as canneries and fruit-drying businesses to save pits from their products for gas mask use. Ordinarily these pits should be shipped whole, but exception has been made for certain California fruit canners and driers who make a valuable by-product from the kernel within apricot seeds.

The Department also has aligned the million members of the boys' and girls' clubs throughout the country, and they are busily working to see which club, district and State can deliver the largest amount in the shortest space and time in this pit and shell drive. They are putting "pep," "jump," "speed," "get-up-and-go" into their drive, and they are using signs, slogans and songs to send the pits and shells over the top. Department stores have barrels placed in their aisles where collections may be put; hotels and community canneries are patriotically putting the stones aside for the Government, but the largest source of supply—one which is practically untapped—is that from the individual households. The amount from any one home seems infinitesimal, but the aggregate from more than 20 million homes will be stupendous.

The stones and shells should be taken to the nearest Red Cross center, where they will be forwarded to the proper department.

DRYING PUMPKINS AND SQUASH.

Well-matured pumpkins of any variety make an acceptable dried product which only requires soaking, for use later in pies or custards. The deeply-colored, solid fleshed varieties are the best for the purpose. Squash of the winter varieties may also be cured in the same way.

Cut into strips one-half inch wide, peel and remove seeds, then cut the long strips with a rotary slicer or by hand into slices one-half inch in thickness. Blanch in vigorously boiling water for three minutes, or preferably in steam for five minutes. A wash-boiler partly filled with boiling water and fitted with a support which will hold a wire basket containing the material just out of the water makes a good steamer. Some varieties blanch more slowly than others; the treatment should be continued until the pieces have lost the opaque character and have become transparent, but must be stopped as soon as this result is obtained.

Spread one or two pieces deep on the trays and begin the drying at 135°. As soon as the pieces have become somewhat plastic the temperature may be increased, but should not be allowed to exceed 160° at any time. The material should be stirred frequently in order to discover and spread out any parts which are not drying properly. If the drying is done in the sun it will be necessary to spread the material in a single layer and to turn the pieces over after a few hours' exposure.

Pumpkin or squash should be dried until the pieces are leathery and show no moisture upon the freshly cut surfaces when bits are cut open and strongly pressed between the hands.

As the material is removed from the drier, place it in a large clean pasteboard or wooden box, lined with paper, and cover to exclude insects by stretching a piece of mosquito netting over the top. Place the box in a warm, dry room and stir the material thoroughly daily, for ten days. The drying meanwhile slowly continues and the whole mass reaches the uniform condition which it must have before it is permanently packed.

Pack in pasteboard boxes lined with a double thickness of waxed paper, or in paper or muslin bags which are tied and placed in a larger bag. Store in a dry, warm, airy place.

HOME-MADE GRAPE JUICE.

Any person familiar with the processes of canning fruit can put up grape juice, for the principles involved are the same. Only clean, sound, well-ripened but not over-ripe grapes should be used. The juice may be extracted by hand or in a cider mill if a light-colored product is desired. Heat this liquid to the boiling point, place in sterilized bottles or jars and carefully seal. The product may be sweetened or not at the time of bottling.

When a red juice is desired the grapes should first be heated to a temperature of 200° Fahrenheit and then strained through a clean cloth or drip-bag. Reheat the liquid after straining, place in containers and seal.

Keep the bottles or cans in a cool place. If bottles are used the corks should be sterilized and the necks sealed with sealing wax. Unfermented juice may be made not only from all varieties of grapes, but from some other fruits, such as apples, pears, cherries, and berries.

Unfermented grape juice can be used in sickness, convalescence, and health. It is generally claimed that a reasonably large quantity of this drink improves digestion, and results in an increase in body weight. Aside from being a delicious beverage, it possesses value in adding variety to various dessert recipes.